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La métrique arabe au XIII^e siècle après al-Ḥaṭīl

Dictionary of arabic and allied loanwords. spanish, portuguese, catalan, galician and kindred dialects

Leiden – Boston: Leiden, 2008 (Handbook of Oriental Studies, 1, 97) p. XCIII-601. [ISBN 978-90-04-16858-9]

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- 1 One of the most fascinating situations of linguistic interference in the Mediterranean basin is without doubt that created by the long presence of Arabic in the Iberian Peninsula. The distinguished Arabist and Semitist Professor Federico Corriente (University of Saragossa) has devoted the greatest part of his painstaking scientific activity to the investigation of the history of Arabic in al-Andalus and of its influence on the Iberian languages (especially Castilian). The impressively long list of his achievements in this field has been since decennia the unavoidable reference bibliography for anyone interested in the linguistic and cultural influence of Arabic on Iberian literatures and idioms. In particular, C. edited and linguistically analyzed the famous “cancionero” of the Andalusian poet Ibn Quzmān (*Gramática, métrica y texto del Cancionero hispanoárabe de Aban Quzmān*, Madrid, Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1980; *El Cancionero hispanoárabe de Ibn Quzman*, Madrid, Editora Nacional, 1984; *Léxico estándar y andalusí del Diwan de Ibn Quzman*, Saragossa, Área de estudios árabes y islámicos de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1993) and managed to give a comprehensive description of Andalusian Arabic (A

grammatical sketch of the Spanish dialect bundle, Madrid, Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1977 and, especially, the voluminous *Dictionary of Andalusí Arabic*, Leiden: Brill, 1997).

- 2 Loanwords are perhaps the most apparent manifestation of linguistic contact. The research on the Arabic loanwords in the main Iberian languages and dialects (Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Portuguese) has been a constant interest of C. The coronation of his efforts was the publication in 1999 of the monumental *Diccionario de arabismos y voces afines en iberorromance* (Madrid, Gredos; a second edition appeared in 2003). The book under review may be basically considered as the English version of that dictionary with some changes and updates.
- 3 The book is made up of a preface (VII-X), a description of the editorial norms (XI-XIV), a “grammar of Arabic loanwords in Ibero-romance” (XV-LXXXI), an index of the romance lexical items discussed in the “grammar” (LXXXIII), the dictionary of the loanwords (3-480), a first appendix listing the “false Arabic loanwords” (481-492) and a second appendix listing all the foreign words present in the dictionary (493-583). Finally, the copious bibliography (585-601) provides the reader with a useful guide to the existing literature on the topic and proves the complexity of the etymological research in the Ibero-Romance domain.
- 4 The author’s preface bitterly highlights the general ideological pressure which the work of the etymologist must undergo in Spain (but the Iberian country is by no means an isolate case). It is clear that to any nationalistically oriented mind the very idea of linguistic mixture is unbearable. An always supposedly pure national culture (when not even a pure race) should be mirrored by a pure national language: foreign contributions to the lexicon are not welcome, especially when they come from a cultural area which is perceived as far and hostile (and Islam is always a threat, of course!). However, it is also very much patent that etymology alone cannot contrast the narrow-mindedness of some sections of the public opinion and of the political scene (and also, sadly enough, of the intelligentsia). Tracing back the history of a word can say much on the existence of relationships among peoples but the deep nature of these relationships and their developments can be fully assessed only within the frame of an extensive historical research based on a critical evaluation of all the available sources (obviously, etyma may be one of these sources). The polemics on the origin of a word or group of words seems thus to be meaningless outside its proper linguistic environment, as it can just marginally contribute to the reconstruction of the general history of a people and a land.
- 5 The second section of C.’s volume presents a synoptic description of the main linguistic phenomena (phonetic: pp. XX-LV; morphologic: pp. LV-LXIV; syntactic: pp. LXIV-LXXVII) which characterize the Arabic loanwords in the Iberian languages and “the rules that govern their transfer from the source language to target languages”. The perhaps most fascinating of these phenomena is the agglutination of the Arabic determinative article *al-* to the majority of Arabic loanwords in Spanish and Portuguese. C. (pp. LXIV-LXXIII) discusses at length the main opinions on this topic (especially Noll’s contribution) and underlines the linguistic and sociologic role played by Berber and Arabs of “Yemenite” origin in the spread of this peculiar feature. Cases of deglutination and false restoration are also analyzed in a synchronical perspective (LXXI-LXXIII). The sociolinguistic aspect of the issue is also duly studied in the frame of the interaction of several different dialects, linguistic registers, substrata and adstrata in the Iberian Peninsula in its Islamic period.

- 6 Coming to the very core of the *Dictionary*, one cannot help admiring the impressive work done by C. in sorting out a long and critically well equipped list of hundreds and hundreds of items. The huge number of entries of the *Dictionary* (all of which presented under several phonetic variants) can be explained by the fact that the book contains words of much different stock. Besides 1) Arabic loanwords *stricto sensu*, which have been accommodated to the vocabulary of Castilian, Portuguese, Catalan and Galician, the book actually includes also 2) loanwords from oriental languages other than Arabic (even when the word did not pass through Arabic to reach Iberoromance: e.g. *badistão*, *basar*, *café*, *caracal*, *caravansará*, *gat* [*gato*], *rabi*); 3) *hapax legomena* (e.g. *ajevío*, *alcotín*, *cedaquin*); 4) unassimilated or not completely assimilated words, including technical terms (e.g. *ab*, *abdal*, *ágama*, *Adonai/y*, *efod*, *devanagari*, *mihrab*, *sife*), jargon and secret language expressions (e.g. *jagual*, *albaire*, *caire*, *hanpa*, *manfla*), and other exotisms of various origin (e.g. *bagibabo*, *cadina*, *chabuco*, *jaguir*, *jamadar*, *mohúr*). The present writer is not a professional linguist and thus is not entitled to discuss the reasons justifying such a wide - and apparently very disputable - range of criteria in selecting the material. It is moreover regrettable that the author preferred not to fully clarify the ratio of his selection procedure and limited himself to a few explanatory lines within his “grammar of Arabic loanwords...” (p. XIX-XX).
- 7 One more cause of perplexity is that only very seldom the author puts the words he is discussing in a clear chronological frame: the source where a lexical item is firstly attested and the time layers on which the whole lexical material should be properly put are almost never stated. This shortcoming gives the way to a sort of “a-chronical” etymology which confuses the reader and partially hinders a full comprehension of the author’s etymological reflections.
- 8 Some proposed etyma seem to be quite daring (e.g. *abanto*, *alimoche*, *caramba*, *dado*, *dansar*, *gat*, *guay*, *loco*, *olé*). I am not in the position to challenge the author’s proposals: only linguists well versed in both Arabic and in Ibero-Romance will be able to support or dismiss C.’s theses. In the following, I thus add only some marginal observations on very few entries of the *Dictionary* from the point of view of Italian which also incorporated an important number of Arabic loanwords.
- 9 *Abracadabra*; the most recent etymological Italian dictionary (Alberto Nocentini (con la collaborazione di Alessandro Parenti), *L’Etimologico. Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 2010, p. 4) retraces the origin of the word back to a Greek etymon (*aúra kat’aúran*, spirit for spirit);
- 10 *albacar* for the discussion of the etymon in the *Dictionary*, it would have been useful a reference to Ital. *barbacane* whose etymology has been analyzed at length by G.B. Pellegrini (lastly in *Ricerche*, pp. 184-189 where he proposes a derivation from Ar., *barbaḥ* probably with a Latin suffixation -anus, -ana);
- 11 *atacar*, for the Italian cognate *attaccare*, Nocentini, *L’Etimologico...*, p. 79, reconstructs a Germanic origin, through ancient French *estache* (‘stake’), from Frankish **stakka*;
- 12 the word *bagibabo*, whose etymon was already in Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiático*, vol. I, Hamburg, Helmut Buske Verlag, 1982 (reprint of the 1919-1921 edition) p. 77, could possibly be analyzed as a compound of Persian *bāḡ* (“tribute”) and Hindi *bābū* (“civil servant, employee”);
- 13 *chabuko* C.’s *Dictionary* finds out a Hindi-Persian origin but the word may perhaps (at least also) reflect Turkish *çabuk*;

- 14 of *malta*, (Nocentini, *L'Etimologico...*, p. 661 retraces the origin back to Greek *máltha* ("a mixture of wax and pitch").
- 15 In analyzing the jargon word *manfla* "brothel", C. proposes an Arabic etymon *muḥālafa* whence he derives also It. *ma(f)fia*. However, in the contributions of Italian scholars to the etymology of this much debated term, the Arabic origin of *mafia* was eventually dismissed (see as latest Nocentini, *L'Etimologico...*, p. 654).
- 16 In the entry *negús*, C. mentions the word *agacé*, as attested in a Portuguese text and in the Portuguese dictionary of Machado and Morais. The *Dictionary* derives it from Ethiopic *nāgasi* "synonym of *negús*" and calls it "a ghost word." Indeed, *agacé* can be found in Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *Historia do descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses*, vol. III, Lisboa, Typographia Rollandiana, 1833, cp. 96, p. 321. On the basis of this source, the word is mentioned in António de Morais Silva, *Grande Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa*, vol. I, Lisboa, Editorial Confluência, 1949¹⁰, p. 446. It is highly probable that *agacé* is the Portuguese reflex of the Gə'əz and Amharic term *aṣe/aṭe*, commonly used in addressing the Ethiopian emperor.
- 17 Catalan *risc* (and its cognates, *risch*, *risco*, *riesgo*) is connected by C. with Arabic *rizq*. The etymological proposal is not new as it can be found already in L. Marcel Devic, *Dictionnaire étymologique des mots français d'origine orientale*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1876, p. 194-195 s.v. *risque*). Currently, the It. cognate *rischio* is analyzed as a reconstructed vulgar Latin word **resēcū(m)* 'reef, cliff' (derivative of *resēcāre*; see Nocentini, p. 1009).

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